1:Du Bois E-5 (1938-1939) 1944
OF5 Alor OF5



Each wife has a certain number of delineated duties, and in addition there is always a large group of women who try to separate the combatants but who manage in their role of peacemakers to land some very effective blows. A whole village may be in a turmoil of struggling women waging a shifting warfare in the mud or dust of the dance place for as long as from two to four hours.

Men at such times are inclined to stand out of range and watch the tide of battle with mixed amusement and contempt. Sometimes a man may become indignant because he feels that the violence is going beyond bounds, that real injury may be done, and that he may be fined. If he is bold, he may step into the melee with a rattan switch and lay about him in an effort to separate enthusiastic combatants. Women usually resent this sort of interference, and as a rule the officious male is turned upon by recent enemies, who combine to drive him back to the fringe of spectators, where it is felt he belongs. A husband who is the cause of such an outburst either sits by passively, wearing an uneasy grin, or, if he is a man of particular dignity, goes off to another village or to his field until things calm down.

Naturally some battles may be much less violent than others, depending on how much real jealousy motivates a woman utilizing this formal cultural outlet. More than once a senior wife who is in earnest makes life so uncomfortable that the junior wife finally insists on a divorce, but even a wife who has urged her husband to buy another woman will go through the forms of a quarrel. The only case in which the culture denies such expression is in the inheritance of a widow through the levirate.

The effect of this cultural pattern is to afford women a very direct and relatively harmless emotional outlet. It reminds one of the formalized wailing required of them as an expression of grief that is denied men. In these two cases the culture grants more direct and recognized outlets to women than to men. It is not surprising, therefore, all other things considered, that men are apt to consider women, in comparison to themselves, somewhat vulgar creatures who do not know how to guard their tongues. It will be recalled that earlier there was occasion to refer to the training boys and men get in translating physical violence into verbal forms and in toning down verbal aggression on pain of financial sanctions. I know of no case in which women, or their kinsmen, were actually fined for verbal excesses, although such threats were made.

In the case of plural wives, separate households are established, and a man is supposed to divide his attention, labor, and gifts equally among them. Any slight on his part may result in reproaches directed toward